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By Antonio Longo

The Strategic Compass aims to cement the foundations for a shared vision for EU security and defence among European Union Member States. This Member State-led process was initiated in 2020 and finalized on end of March 2022.

This document is a schematic contribute to the debate on the “strategic compass” issue, in particular as regards to the relationship between the concepts of security and development. It has been written before the war was triggered by Russia on Ukraine.

Some points under discussion

1. The world faces a choice between:
 - a “global system of continent states” engaged in a struggle for hegemony or equilibrium, as was the case for the European system of states, for centuries. From time to time one state or another (Spain, then France, and lastly Germany) would attempt to unify the continent using military power (the sword of Satan, as Spinelli called it). These attempts were always defeated thanks to the intervention of “lateral” powers (Great Britain or Russia) which, through a coalition of states, managed to restore balance

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in Europe. Now a similar system seems to be emerging, with a struggle for world hegemony (China/US) taking place in the economic arena, offset by military tensions in the Pacific (US/China), the Middle East (US-Russia-China), Africa (Russia-China-US-France) and Eastern Europe (Russia/US/EU);

- a “multilateral system of states” (starting with the largest) in which the struggle for hegemony is replaced by a conscious choice to cooperate on common objectives, none of which can be achieved by any state individually: environmental protection, the health of the human species, the scientific and technological revolution, global economic development, safeguarding the values and identities of the earth’s peoples.
2. The European Union must work to ensure that the world progresses towards a “multilateral system of states”. This is in its interest, as well as its DNA (given that it was established with the aim of overcoming the absolute sovereignty of states) because:
 - The EU is an economic power, but not a military one
 - Only in a “multilateral system of states” can the EU play an important role, and make the most of its leadership in some crucial sectors, such as safeguarding the environment and health, establishing universal standards to manage the digital and technological revolution, and defending the rule of law.
 3. In order to pursue a political approach that works towards a “multilateral system of states”, the European Union must decide on the **guiding principles** of its policy towards the rest of the world, starting with the neighbouring areas (Eastern Europe / Middle-East and Mediterranean / Africa).

Once these strategic decisions are in place the EU will be able to determine its relations with the US, Russia and China.
 4. When it comes to the neighbouring areas, the EU faces two major issues:

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- Security:
 - Russia is not secure because the breakdown of the USSR weakened it politically and it now feels squeezed between two superpowers (China/US). After abandoning Gorbachev's plan for a "common European home", Russia is intent on achieving security using power politics to weaken and divide the EU, applying the political paradigm of the past (that of the old European system of states). Russia's insecurity also spells insecurity for Europe, in terms of pressure on Ukraine and the potential destabilization of the Balkans (Serbia).
 - the Middle East is insecure: the old confrontation between the US and Russia has now been replaced by a direct confrontation between "regional" powers: Iran, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt ... which are reproducing a check and balance system similar to that in place in Europe in the past. This insecurity has repercussions on Europe, in the form of uncontrolled migration, religious radicalization, terrorism, the nuclear threat.
 - Africa is insecure because it is politically divided and therefore open to hegemonic interference from the superpowers (China / Russia / US) and pressures from some of the old European states (France, Italy, the UK...). This scenario will continue until the African Union takes shape by establishing an "African common market", as Europe did in the 1950s. Insecurity in Africa affects Europe in terms of uncontrolled migration, internal destabilization, terrorism, and geo-political changes that serve specific superpowers.
- Development

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- Russia is economically weak (its GDP is lower than Italy's), and the fact that its exports depend essentially on gas makes it vulnerable. The free trade area with the other countries of the "Commonwealth of Independent States" (established after the demise of the USSR) has never functioned fully and a genuine "common market" has never developed. The energy transition towards carbon neutrality appears challenging: the economy is still driven by large, state-run production structures, under political control: in this scenario the economic relationship with the West automatically becomes a political issue (see Stream 2)
- The Middle East has to face the end of oil, the resource that ensured the area's importance for a century, as well as its development (and wars). The energy transition of this region can only be accomplished by creating a "common market" for some common goods (water, agriculture, renewable resources), accompanied by the creation of "federal-type unions" (Israeli-Palestinian?). Otherwise we can expect to see enduring instability and development gaps between different areas.
- Africa is potentially very rich in natural resources. To drive development there needs to be unity, otherwise the continent will continue to be plundered. The main aspects to work on are: supplying energy and electricity to help combat poverty, the water issue, developing sustainable agriculture, and major infrastructure and communication projects to unite this huge continent. These issues have to be resolved for "common market" of the African Union to take off. The EU's role in fostering this is crucial. Europe

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has an interest in a Euro-African energy transition, to be pursued through complementary strategies for the reduction of CO2 emissions, the development of renewable energies, infrastructures for the production and transport of hydrogen and more. There is no shortage of projects, but there must be political will on both sides of the Mediterranean.

The EU's security policy (foreign and defence) therefore revolves around two key concepts: **security** and **development**.

Europe will be secure internally if it can help the neighbouring areas develop.

Europe will develop internally if the neighbouring areas are secure.

The neighbouring areas will be secure if Europe aids their development

Neighbouring areas will develop if Europe helps ensure their security

Brief considerations on global relations

If the world progresses towards a US/China bipolar scenario, Europe will be relegated to the role of the US's junior partner, just as Russia can only play the role of China's junior partner.

Europe and Russia, on the other hand, have a common interest in developing a "multipolar" global system based on US-China-Europe-Russia (potentially adding Japan, India and, in the future, the African Union and the Latin American Union) capable of orienting the global political system towards forms of global supranational unity, the only approach which is fit to tackle the challenges of the future.

The developments in the following relationships are important:

1. **US - EU.** The Atlantic Pact and NATO are not in question, but the relationship between the US and European countries needs to be

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redefined. The US needs to recognize that for NATO to be a strong Alliance there has to be a genuine equal partnership between the US and the EU (an EU with defence capabilities). We should no longer be thinking in terms of “**the US and its European allies**”, but **the US and the EU**. Europe needs this to be able to act, on its own initiative, towards Russia, China, the Middle East, Africa and the rest of the world. For multilateralism to develop the EU must have an autonomous role within the framework of Atlantic collaboration.

2. **EU-Russia.** Europe must be able to offer Russia security and development, and receive security and development in return. An autonomous EU (within the framework of the Atlantic Alliance) would be able to negotiate with Russia on Ukraine joining the EU (not NATO), and offer Russia free-trade agreements for goods and services, free movement of people and capital. As a member of the EU (but not NATO, like Finland or Sweden) Ukraine could also be part of a reformed Commonwealth of Independent States, working in the direction of a common market in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Ukraine should act as a “bridge” between the EU and Russia, within the framework of a “common European home”.

This is a prerequisite for ensuring that the EU and Russia become equal, rather than junior, partners of the US and China.

To this end, the EU needs to redefine its institutions:

- a. It is time to move beyond direct contact between individual countries (France, Germany, Italy....) and Russia, and “Normandy format” talks
- b. Foreign policy must be decided by the European Council, not the current President of the EU
- c. Foreign policy should be implemented by the High Representative, given a more centralized coordinating role, in strict connection with the

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President of the European Commission

- d. Once the terms of a potential agreement have been defined with Russia, there will have to be negotiations
- e. It will be necessary to appoint a single negotiator, as was the case with Brexit. Angela Merkel could be the negotiator of the EU-Russia agreement on the status of Ukraine in the EU and the Commonwealth of Independent States. This would be a “bridge” creating a vast free trade area from the Atlantic to Vladivostok.

An area of security and development. Which makes the multilateral system possible on a global scale.

February 14, 2022



The Middle East exploded once more this spring, around the crucial issue that fuels an interminable conflict: the Palestine question.

Wars have been fought over it, and terrorist operations of various types have been

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conducted. All in a setting that sees the great powers (the US and Russia) engaged in flexing their muscles, and exploiting states, political and terrorist movements to shore up their power in this corner of the world.

Recent years have seen the advent of various “regional” powers (Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia) intent on operating in a similar fashion, with the aim of carving out their own area of influence (hegemony), in agreement with one superpower or another, depending on the circumstances.

From the Second World War onwards, the Israel/Palestine question has unfolded in an area that is crucial for the development of the global economy due to the presence of oil, the main energy source of the twentieth century. To ‘govern’ this part of the world, political stability is vital, and the state of Israel has always been, and remains, crucial in this regard.

While in the future the role of oil is destined to diminish as other forms of energy come into play, this remains a strategic hotspot: a crossroads between Asia, Africa and Europe, a key leg of the “Belt and Road initiative”, characterised by one state equipped with nuclear weapons (Israel) and another that wants them (Iran): governing this area is therefore essential in terms of maintaining a global balance.

Attempts to stabilize the zone with a solution based on the “two peoples-two states” formula, with negotiations of various kinds, have proved unsuccessful. But even if this approach had been successful, it would certainly not have contributed to a “lasting” peaceful relationship between the two states. Borders are drawn based on power relations between states at any given time, and these can subsequently change, giving rise to new demands.

As Alexander Hamilton writes in “The Federalist”, *“To look for a continuation of harmony between a number of independent, unconnected sovereignties in the same neighbourhood, would be to disregard the uniform course of human events,*

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and to set at defiance the accumulated experience of ages“.

An independent, entirely sovereign Palestinian state amidst other independent, entirely sovereign states would only generate increased conflict among states. This is the lesson that should have been learned from the history of the European continent through the centuries, and up to the tragedy of the Second World War. States with absolute sovereignty are by nature war-like (Kant).

We can therefore imagine that the Middle East peace process should involve:

1. Putting an end to the Russian-American tug of war for (ultimately gaining) control over the area, by including the European Union as a power interested in political stabilization based on the economic development of the area, no longer in thrall to oil, but linked to the energy transition towards a sustainable economy, starting with agriculture. Israel's technological capabilities would be made available to the entire area (which would benefit from them to develop), in exchange for gaining access to a large market, something that Israel needs.
2. In this context we can therefore imagine an Israeli-Palestinian Federation as an initial nucleus of economic integration with neighbouring countries, thus also removing them from the interests of the regional powers in the vicinity.

All of this is based on the assumption that the EU, which stands to gain from a solution of this kind succeeds in exploiting this crisis, the umpteenth, to carve out a role for itself in foreign policy, thus discovering that the strategic interests of its main countries (Germany, France and Italy) coincide with European interests in stabilizing the Middle East, which also borders on the Mediterranean.

Europe recently accomplished a quantum leap in budgetary terms to tackle the economic crisis triggered by the pandemic, by creating “European fiscal capacity”: common debt on future investments and increased budget, with a view

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to introducing new, additional own resources.

It is time for a quantum leap in European foreign policy too. The Middle East is the test-bed, right now.

It is up to the European Parliament to come up with solutions and not just “hope” that others will take care of it.

The European Commission has to take the initiative and lead the way, not wait for the European Council.

It is also up to European citizens to point out that political coexistence is possible, even between different peoples, religions and cultures. The construction of Europe proves it.



“Europe was born in a crisis and will be forged in crises”, Altiero Spinelli used to

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say, convinced that European unity was “*the political project of our time*”.

27th December 2020 will probably go down in Europeans’ collective memory as the day when the Union, as it began distributing the vaccine to all its member countries, showed that it was capable of offering its citizens protection and acting as a united front against the virus, a common enemy which has had a devastating impact on our health and our way of life. Ursula Von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, has stated that the vaccine will also be distributed to the Western Balkan countries (not yet members of the EU) and North Africa: this represents the first concrete step in a European foreign policy.

An institution that guarantees these “common goods” is already a state, albeit incomplete.

Faced with this huge global crisis, the European Union reacted promptly. Despite the handicap of a decision-making process that does not always allow majority voting, the EU has made clear political choices, equipping itself with the tools to face both the pandemic and the serious economic downturn generated by the lockdown.

Firstly, the prompt intervention of the ECB enabled the purchase of government bonds from the countries most affected by the pandemic. Then the Commission suspended the “Stability and Growth Pact” to allow states to go into debt to fund the first measures to support businesses and citizens; it also set up a “European unemployment scheme” (SURE) worth 100 billion euros.

But, above all, last May the Commission – which now increasingly resembles a “European government” – launched the *Recovery Plan for Europe*, whose name recalls the Marshall Plan (the European Recovery Program), the initiative that helped rebuild Europe after the war.

As is known, the Plan is based on two instruments. The first is Next Generation

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EU, namely 750 billion euros in investments aimed at funding the recovery and, at the same time, managing the transformation of the European economy towards the energy transition and the digital revolution. The second is the increase in budget (from 1% to 2% of European GDP), and the addition of European debt securities (union bonds) to finance investments. New “own resources” for the Union are also in the pipeline, from a carbon border tax (to reduce CO₂ emissions), to a web tax (on tech giants), as well as the introduction of measures to combat tax havens and money laundering.

The Plan’s “political philosophy” is clear: to put Europe back on its feet and drive change, in the direction of the Green Deal and the digital revolution, to enable the Union to face global challenges on an equal footing with the other superpowers. “Nation states are no longer the answer” is a sentiment shared by Angela Merkel, leader of the most important EU country, and Ursula Von der Leyen, representative of the “European government”: two women who personify the shift from national to European politics.

The Recovery Plan therefore represents a strong, united political response, which has made it possible to overcome the flaw that “hobbled” the Maastricht treaty (creating a currency without a state, as is generally said), teaming the euro with the first form of European economic policy: investments based on common resources, guaranteed by a stronger budget. In this respect, the Plan is therefore revolutionary: it marks the introduction of a European fiscal capacity, additional to and operating in parallel with that of the Member States. And all of this has been achieved without reforming the Treaties: the Union has thus strengthened its implicitly federal nature, upholding the principle that European solidarity is possible if there is common control over the use of resources, guaranteed by common rules and institutions.

This philosophy also enabled the “compromise” reached at the end of the year, which establishes a link between the distribution of common resources and

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respect for the rule of law. Like all compromises, it is not entirely satisfactory, but it has allowed the resources of Next Gen EU to be linked to respect for the rule of law, removing the veto threatened by Poland and Hungary.

The objectives of the Recovery Plan are valid not only for Europe, but also the rest of the world, which has to find a cooperative, non-conflictual way of managing both the environmental crisis and the technological revolution. Europe is leading the energy transition and helping to write the rules for the digital revolution, showing people that there needs to be a “common sovereignty” over a number of global public goods, at the service of humanity.



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There is growing awareness that, these days, mankind is faced with difficult choices. The unfair distribution of resources and power in the world, the resulting large-scale-migration, environmental crises and pandemics - also caused by a deteriorating connection between men, nature and the land - , the digital revolution and the conflicts between world powers; all these are signals that we are going through an *epochal change*, rather than an epoch of change.

In 1941, in the midst of World War II, a few antifascists who were interned on the island of Ventotene realised that an epoch was closing. The European system could no longer provide for the progress of its peoples. For many centuries, there had been a repetitive pattern, steady swing between fights for hegemony and attempts to strike a new balance among European powers. The actors on the scene were nation-states, the main instrument of their confrontation was war, and the scene was Europe - back then, the centre of the world.

The *Ventotene Manifesto* postulated the end of nation-states as a historic and political fact founded on the principle of absolute sovereignty. The first federalist movements were launched: the *Movimento Federalista Europeo* in 1943, then the *Union des Fédéralistes Européens* in 1946 and the *World Federalist Movement* in 1947. Those profound intuitions gave rise to the long process of European unification, based on the establishment of common supranational institutions. The relations between states, previously founded on violence and war, were transformed into relations based on law and peace. The start of the first supranational era in history put an end to the constant swing between balance and hegemony among European states.

For almost forty years, the world was governed by the balance of powers between the USA and the URSS, based on the nuclear deterrent. The process of European unification developed in the "west"; only here was the supranational process able to coexist with the values of freedom, democracy and social justice. In the west, the dominant power provided the two essential public goods: security and

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economic development, starting with monetary stability (the dollar standard).

1989 marked the end of that balance. What ensued was a short-lived attempt by the US to become the only global superpower (unipolarism), governing the world economic development. The start of European monetary unification in 1992 and the financial and economic crisis in 2007 showed that the US could not guarantee the development of the world alone, in spite of their technological and military power.

Other continental powers have emerged, or re-emerged: China, Russia, possibly India, and more. Seventy years of European integration have set up a state-like, though incomplete structure. The European Union has both federal traits – in those areas where its organs decide by majority – and confederal, where decisions are still made by unanimity (taxation and security, mostly).

As the world is congregating around global powers, this means that this is a *state-based world system* which, by its own nature, will necessarily swing between “*balance and hegemony*”, just as it used to do: in turns, actors will try to secure a strong competitive advantage over others (e.g. in digital or space technologies).

With its focus on the absolute sovereignty of states, this system will generally fall back on political models that were typical of the old European system and caused two world wars in the 20th Century. Back then, the development of the production process needed a continental market, the lack of which, coupled with a political framework lacking a “common governance”, led to war. Those confined in Ventotene became federalists because they learned that lesson and found the correct answer (“*for a free and united Europe*”).

Today, the globalization of markets, production, finance and consumption, as well as the growing pressure for international mobility for individuals, are nothing but the signs of deep movements towards a *growing world unity*. These signs can be seen in the *major revolutions and crises* that humankind is experiencing, bringing

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with them a new definition of the relationship between mankind, technology and nature. If it is not governed by global rules and institutions, the digital revolution can result in a new hierarchic order of states based on their “scientific know-how” – again, the power of a single state over others. If it is not managed by global democratic institutions, the environmental revolution risks endangering the balanced relationship between the human species and other forms of life on the Earth – again, triggering a possible fight among states to control resources and for the survival of the fittest.

What emerges is once more the historic dichotomy between the development of production, which is inherently global, and the underlying political and institutional structure, still based on nation-states (even though they are sometimes continent-sized). A few superpowers compete to be global rulers. The war with weapons is replaced by competition on international trade, digital technologies and, soon, space control. This shift is favoured by the present world order, so terribly similar to the order of European states in the 20th Century, which caused the annihilation of peoples on the old continent.

This is why it is so necessary now to go back to the alternative of Ventotene and to its fundamental truth (*political division among men produces war*) and to call to action, in order to build the first global supranational institutions: for environment, wealth, international trade, the monetary system and the digital world. Confirming the primacy of international politics over home politics, will support economic and political integration in Africa, the Middle-East and Latin America, because the unity of these areas will be a prerequisite for them to play an active role on the global stage. This, in turn, will strongly push ahead the process of political unification in Europe. Only with its own foreign policy, security policy and fiscal capacity will a united Europe be able to share the world stage on an equal footing with other continental powers, so as to lay the founding stones of a *common world home*.

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From this point of view, stronger EU institutions will turn the Union into an “open federation”, a model to be followed on the path towards a world federation.

The main point therefore is not to tackle the challenges linked to production processes and their institutional consequences on the basis of the idea of “power” (of one’s country), nor of a “closed” Europe that should balance other powers. Quite the opposite. Shaping the Union as an *open federation* is the essential prerequisite to set up an institutional framework that can strengthen the universal principle of “common interest”.

This is what mankind needs in order to progress on the path of unity.

Thus, *Ventotene is still a lighthouse for thought and action.*